

WHAT DID HE MEAN THAT

Seemingly Impossible Bidding Sequences

Two psychiatrists passed each other on an escalator, one going up, the other going down. As they passed, the one going up waived and said good morning. Puzzled, the other thought about this, and when he reached the bottom said "what did he mean by that?"

Even experienced partnerships have bidding misunderstandings. Many years ago, after a complicated bidding sequence, two of the best players in the world found themselves in six diamond, doubled and redoubled, on a 3/0 or a 3/1 fit. Each bid is supposed to tell a story, but sometimes it turns out to be a horror story.

Here are two auctions that an experienced partnership should get right, and even if the bids had never come up before, should be able to work out.

You hold A K 2
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 K 10 9 8 7
 A K 8 4

and you open 1 diamond. Partner bids one no trump. You decide to bid two clubs and partner bids two spades. **What did he mean by that?** Run through the possibilities. He cannot be showing spades. When he bid one no trump, he denied having four spades. He can't be trying to force the auction. He has already limited his hand to 10 or fewer HCP. Why did he bid two spades?

What would you do in this auction with the following two hands?

10 9 8	10 9 8
Q 5	A 5
A 9 8 7	Q J
Q J 8 6	Q J 10 9 8 7

With the first hand, over one diamond, you would bid one no trump. No reason not to. You are not strong enough to bid two clubs. Balanced. Partner may be as short as three diamonds, but likely has four. So you don't want to raise diamonds right away. One no trump seems to be just about right.

When partner rebids 2 clubs, you are maximum for your bid, you like both of his suits. You might choose to bid two, or even three diamonds. I would bid three. My hand just got better. I have a fit in both of his suits, and my hand is now worth a little extra. Partner will know that my jump does not promise more than 10 HCP. After all, I bid one no trump first.

On the second hand, when partner bids two clubs, your hand gets much better. Again, all of your points are working. The Queen/Jack of partner's first suit are great cards. And he is showing an unbalanced hand, with clubs and diamonds. A raise to three clubs does not really show a hand that is this good, and partner might want to stop in two no trump. You bid is TWO SPADES.

This is actually a convention. It is called the "Impossible Two Spade Bid." It shows a GOOD limit raise in the opening bidder's second suit. It almost always deals with diamonds and clubs.

But if you don't play one no trump forcing, and you don't play Flannery, it could also work on a hand like this:

A 5 4 6 3 K Q 10 9 3 7 6 2	Partner opens one heart, and having nothing better to do, you bid one no trump. Partner bids two diamonds. Bid two spades, showing a powerful limit raise in the second suit, in diamonds.
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The bid does not come up very often, but when it does you have a powerful advantage over partnerships that do not have this in their arsenal.

The second unusual situation was described in an August bulletin article by Mike Lawrence entitled - interesting enough - What Is Partner Doing?

You hold	A Q 9 7 6 4 5 Q 8 7 5 8 4	West 1 Club 2 Hearts	North PASS 3 Diamonds	East 1 Heart 4 Hearts	You 1 Spade ?????
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Partner's three diamond bid seems to be IMPOSSIBLE. He did not overcall one diamond. He cannot have a good diamond suit, and a decent hand. If he had, he would have overcalled. As the psychiatrist said, "What did he mean by that?" This is a **fit showing bid**. It shows a good fit in spades, along with decent values in diamonds. Bid four spades. It will make, or maybe go down one, and with your points in the same suits, you probably cannot beat four hearts. Your hand got much better when partner bid diamonds. These are the two hands:

K 10 8 3 J 7 4 A J 10 9 8 4	A Q 9 7 6 4 5 Q 8 7 5 9 6	You have 16 HCP to their 24, but if the king of diamonds is on sides, four is cold. If it is off sides, they make four hearts, and
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actually makes five hearts if the spades split 3/0 or if one of them has a singleton diamond.

This auction serves two purposes. It tells you where partner's points are, and helps you evaluate your hand, allowing you to bid four spades safely. But, better still it tells you what to lead against their heart contract if they bid five hearts.

These are two advanced bidding sequences, but the bids have meanings, important ones. Learn them. They have no downside. Unlike many conventions, you do not give up another useful purpose for the bid that you make.