

The Beginner's Page - 14

Responding to partner's big balanced hand

Last week we saw that big balanced hands of 20 or more points open 2NT (or open 2♣ and rebid 2NT), but how does responder then bid? There are various different schemes, but in Standard American we simply use transfers and Stayman, just the same as if partner had opened 1NT but we are necessarily one level higher.

It makes no difference if partner opens 2NT or if it has gone 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT, so I'll just assume a 2NT opening: -

- 3♣ = Stayman – it asks partner to bid his cheapest 4 card major, otherwise 3♦.
- 3♦ = Transfer to ♥'s
- 3♥ = Transfer to ♠'s
- 3NT = to play (no 4 card major).
- 4♣ = Gerber, asking for aces.

Now since we are up at the 3 level we do not have the luxury of being able to transfer and then bid another suit as that will normally take us past 3NT, so we can only do that with hands that are looking for slam. With today's Hands 1,2,3 partner has opened 2NT (20-21 points): -

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	
♠ A10932	♠ ♠ A10732	♠ Q7432	With Hand 1 we probably want to play in 4♠ (but not if partner has hand 5 below). So we offer him the choice by transferring and then bidding 3NT.
♥ 762	♥ 762	♥ 762	
♦ 1097	♦ 1097	♦ 1097	With Hand 2 we want to play in 4♠, so we transfer and then bid 4♠.
♣ 96	♣ 6	♣ 96	With Hand 3 there probably is no game. But 3♠ will play better than 2NT and so we transfer and then pass 3♠.

Now let's see what opener should do. With the following hands you open 2NT and partner bids 3♥, a transfer to ♠'s.

Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6	
♠ KJ5	♠ J5	♠ AK85	With Hand 4 we complete the transfer and if partner then bids 3NT we convert to 4♠. This hand (opposite Hand 1) is from the club two weeks ago, 3 pairs got it wrong and played in 3NT.
♥ AKQ3	♥ KQ3	♥ AKQ3	
♦ KQ2	♦ AKQ82	♦ Q2	With Hand 5 we complete the transfer and pass a subsequent 3NT from partner.
♣ A108	♣ A108	♣ A108	With Hand 6 we have a lovely fit and will probably make game even if partner is virtually bust (say Hand 3). We cannot afford to lazily complete the transfer as partner may pass. So with this superb fit, we do not bid 3♠, but 4♠.