

IMAGINATIVE BIDDING

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Where did I just read that nowadays bridge players tend to bid according to set rules, and very rarely take the opportunity to exercise judgment? Part of the reason must be due to the fact that bidding systems have become more articulate and thus better able to describe a wide variety of hands than was true in the past. (1430 key card Blackwood is a good example, not to mention Jacoby transfers, 2NT major suit raises, splinter bids etc. etc.) But perhaps bridge players' mental muscles have atrophied since they are so seldom called upon to exercise judgment anymore.

So here are three bidding situations, presented as problems, which I met in national competition in the 1950's. You are called upon to exercise not only your judgment but use some imagination as well. In those days Jacoby transfers didn't exist--a five card major was shown by bidding the suit after initiating a Stayman sequence. Also, two-over-one responses were not only not forcing to game, they didn't even promise another bid if opener rebid his suit. Exotica like Flannery, unusual no trump and the like were also unknown, but none of that affects the hands presented here. Notrump openings, 16-18 points, guaranteed a balanced hand (no singleton, at most one doubleton) and *usually*, a doubleton could be no weaker than Kx.

Hand 1. You are playing in the Spingold (Los Angeles, 1960), and while you have a pretty good team including such stalwarts as Peter Johnson, Sidney Lorvan and Chuck Burger, the opponents are, at least on paper (and in seeding) even better, They are Ira Rubin-Oswald Jacoby and Kaplan-Sheinwold. You and Peter played the first half against Rubin and Jacoby, and your team is down enough that you want to stir things up a little, but not so much as to suggest reckless action. With both sides vulnerable, Freddie Sheinwold to your right opens one (weak of course) notrump. Holding

32 A2 KQ10975 KJ9

what is your call?

Suppose you double. It goes redouble, pass, pass. What now? (Your teammates at the other table are also playing weak notrumps, and Jacoby holds your cards, if that's relevant).

2. This is another match in the same Spingold. This time you and Sid Lorvan are playing against Gene Davidson and Alex Tschekaloff. I don't remember the rest of the team, but Gene and Alex were a very strong pair, and so were their teammates. I knew Alex very well, having partnered him on numerous occasions, and he was one of the most emotional players who ever took up the game. With nobody vulnerable you hold

AK762 A8 J102 542

opening one spade; Sidney responds two clubs. You rebid two spades (in those days a 2NT rebid showed extra values). It goes pass, pass, and Alex, your RHO, reopens with a double. Gene bids three hearts and Sidney persists to three spades. Alex passes. Well?

3. This time you are playing with Sidney in the first ever Spring Nationals open pairs (Atlantic City, 1958). Sidney opens 1NT and you bid 2 clubs, Stayman, holding

J10532 AQ AK7 J42

Sidney, believe it or not, answers two spades. Your turn.

ANSWERS

1. Bid two clubs! In the first place you should realize that your partner is bankrupt, and that a you likely have only six or seven tricks in a diamond contract--a sacrifice is out of the question. So there's no point to bidding diamonds unless you're doubled in two clubs in which case you can always run. But if partner is on lead against the final contract wouldn't you rather have a club lead than a diamond? (Against notrump, remember, *you're* on lead).

Bonanza! The bidding proceeds three clubs to your left and three notrump by Freddie, looking at a pretty good club stopper (AQ10). You lead the king of diamonds and dummy puts down the doubleton jack! You get endplayed for down one, but our teammates easily made four spades at the other table. The complete hand:

AKQ87
KJ109
J2
63

32	1065
A2	8765
KQ10975	43
KJ9	8752

J94
Q43
A86
AQ104

2. Bid four spades! Of course, usually anathema to contract for game voluntarily after having passed the hand out at the two level. But observe the effect on the emotional Mr. Tschekaloff if you actually *make* four spades. For the rest of the match he'll be thinking of nothing else except that he reopened the bidding for you to reach game. In fact, after I made four spades Alex got up from the table, went over to the nearest wall and started beating his head against it! Really! The hand:

Q4
65
K953
AJ963

J85	1093
Q10973	KJ42
Q4	A876
Q107	K8

AK762
A8
J102
542

Of course, four spades is a fabulously lucky make. Spades break 3-3, and the Q10 of clubs and the Q of diamonds are all on side. But I was willing to risk a fewimps for the chance to put Alex permanently out of the match. Note that three hearts doubled goes for 300, but it's hard to double and, in any event, Alex wouldn't have been as upset as he was when we bid game.

3. This is a hand on which you'd like to invite a slam without committing yourself to it. The way to do this is to cuebid and then raise spades. While the first bid may be ambiguous, the subsequent spade raise identifies it as a slam try. So do you cuebid three diamonds or three hearts?

Say you bid three hearts and partner bids three notrump. Now what?

Pass! Partner has doubleton heart, most likely Kx. With three-card support he would have raised hearts, on the supposition that you were showing a five-card suit. Do you want to play a slam with the duplication of Kx opposite AQ? I think not. You don't dare correct to four spades, since partner, now reading your three-heart bid as a cue, will bid slam. And even 5 spades is in jeopardy on the hand despite the fact that partner has a super maximum!

Partner's hand:

AK76

K10

J43

AK65

You may get lucky and make six by picking up the spade suit (Qxx was onside) and set up dummy's fourth club for a diamond pitch, but it's definitely against the odds. In fact, every other pair was in six spades down one; we got an absolute top for playing three notrump making four. In discussing this hand with other players, I learned that everyone who cuebid (some bid slam directly) bid three diamonds. So nobody else learned about the duplication in the heart suit.

Well, I'm not advocating that you drop your conventions or anything like that. But do also use some imagination in your bidding. In any event, it makes bridge a lot more fun.

