

LESSON THREE

Responding to No Trump Opening with Unbalanced hand

Most of you will be familiar with the Stayman convention when responder to NT opening bids, bids 2C to find if partner has a four card major.

The important consideration before you bid Stayman is to know what your rebid will be whatever your partner says.

When partner opens 1NT and you hold 4S and/or 4H with a minimum of 11 points you should use Stayman. You need 11 points so that if partner bids 2D saying I have no 4 card major you can safely bid 2NT without telling porkies. You do not have to have 11 points if you are not going to re-bid 2NT.

Opener always replies with his 4 card major if he has one or 2Diamonds if not. If he has 2 four card majors he replies 2H and if responder then bids 2NT he can bid 3S.

There are other occasions when you can use Stayman e.g. 2 five card majors or 6-5 but you are less likely to get a positive reply. You could also use with 4-4-4-1 (the 1 being Clubs). At a later time we will also discuss another use for Stayman

As responder once opener has rebid you decide whether to leave, go to game or invite game according to the number of points you hold.

If you do not use transfers (which are not part of standard Acoll) then you should know how to use extended Stayman.

Extended Stayman.

When partner opens 1NT and responder holds 5-5, 6-5 or 6-6 in majors then he knows that very definitely they do not want to be in a No Trump contract.

The problem is which suit should they be in? Responder knows that opener must have 3 cards in at least one of the Majors. So responder initially bids 2C and is very grateful if partner has a 4 card major but more often than not he hasn't.

So responders next bid should be 3D saying to partner we must be in a major suit please tell me your best 3 card major.

So the bidding goes 1NT – 2C - 2D (no 4 card major) 3D (asking for 3 card major) 3H or 3S.

Now we shall have a look at Transfers. They are not part of Basic Acoll but many of you use them as do I.

Transfers were originally used in the States where they use a high No Trump. The basic idea is that the strong hand is kept by declarer and the weak hand is on the table.

In Acoll we use a low No Trump so there is not a strong hand to hide. Also there is some merit in the thought that the content of the 1NT hand is known so it may be better to have that hand exposed.

Transfers

If responder is weak but has a long major instead of doing a weak takeout he can ask partner to bid the suit thereby transferring the bid.

Most people play red suit transfers only. A bid of 2D over 1NT asks opener to bid 2H. A bid of 2H over 1NT opening asks opener to bid 2S.

Although I have given an example here of a weak hand responder can also be strong and must decide the level to which they are going to bid.

All the same principles apply over a 2NT opening. 2NT – 3D asks for transfer to 3H and 2NT – 3H asks for transfer to 3S.

I personally do not use transfers to minor suits. I have an agreement with my partners is that if I bid 2S over 1NT opening then I have precisely 11 HCPs and if I bid 2NT I have precisely 12 HCPs.

Using all the above means that all bids at 2 level over 1NT opening have a conventional meaning.

1NT - 2C is Stayman asking for 4 card major.

1NT – 2D is transfer to hearts.

1NT – 2H is transfer to spades.

1NT - 2S is precisely 11 HCPs.

1NT - 2NT is precisely 12 points.

To sum up you should have an agreement with your partner(s) as to whether you use Transfers or extended Stayman. Just saying no transfers isn't enough as you will get into problems with 5-5 or greater hands in Major suits and you will find yourself guessing where to go.

Hands 1 & 2

Please try bidding these hands first with Extended Stayman then using Transfers.

Hands 3-8 are for next weeks lesson but if you would like a sneak preview.....