

The Beginner's Page - 9

I have covered responder's bids when partner opens one of a suit in the past few articles. Time now to consider what to do when partner opens 1NT.

Up to now, we have only dealt with natural bids, it's time to discover our first conventional bid. There are thousands of conventional bids around, and the most common are undoubtedly Blackwood (asking for aces) and Stayman and Jacoby transfers (the latter two used when partner opens 1NT). This week we'll deal with Stayman

The first thing to remember when partner opens 1NT is that he has a balanced hand. Balanced hands usually play well in NT and NT scores more than a minor suit. In all of our examples, partner had opened 1NT (15-17).

Now when partner opens 1NT we know how many points he has (15-17) and it is up to us to stop now, invite game or bid game. We need 8-9 points to invite game and a good 9+ points is usually enough to bid game without inviting.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	
♠ 1095	♠ 1095	♠ K105	All of these hands are fairly balanced and we have no reason to think of anything other than NT as a final strain. So with hand 1 we pass; with Hand 2 we invite with 2NT and with Hand 3 we bid 3NT. Note that even a 5 card ♣ or ♦ suit is not worth mentioning, NT scores more.
♥ 976	♥ Q76	♥ QJ8	
♦ J9	♦ KJ942	♦ KJ942	
♣ KJ942	♣ Q9	♣ KJ	

Stayman

Fine, a minor suit is usually not even worth mentioning; but major suit(s) are different! There is only 10 points difference between the scores for a NT contract and a ♥/♠ contract and if there is a major suit fit (4-4, 5-3 or better) then you usually get more tricks by playing in the major.

Hand 4	Hand 5	
♠ J87	♠ Q76	Partner has again opened 1NT. Hand 4 is worth a game invitation and Hand 5 is worth game. But in NT or is there a 4-4 ♥ fit? If we respond 2♥, how does opener know if that is a 4 or 5 card suit? Now I said above that we don't bother to mention a ♣ or ♦ suit, so the 2♣/♦ bids are spare. We use the 2♣ bid for the Stayman Convention. It says 'I have a 4 card major (possibly two 4 card majors) and I want to find out if we have a fit. It is totally artificial and says nothing about the ♣ suit
♥ Q1095	♥ A1095	
♦ KJ92	♦ KJ92	
♣ Q9	♣ J9	

With both Hand 4 and 5 we bid Stayman 2♣. The responses to Stayman by opener are: -

- 2♦ = I have no 4 card major
- 2♥ = I have 4 ♥'s (and also possibly 4 ♠'s)
- 2♠ = I have 4 ♠'s but do not have 4 ♥'s.

So with Hand 4 we bid 2♣ Stayman. If partner replies 2♦ (no major) or 2♠ (4 ♠'s but not 4 ♥'s) then we bid 2NT – showing our 8-9 points and invitational to 3NT. If partner bids 2♥ then we invite the 4♥ game by bidding 3♥. Hand 5 is worth game but we still start with Stayman. Over 2♦/♠ we bid 3NT and over 2♥ we bid 4♥. One final point; since partner must respond to 2♣ we may have to play in 2NT and so 2♣ guarantees invitational values +. There are exceptions, but for now let's say Stayman guarantees 8 or more points.