

Rubens' Pearls on Hand Evaluation (10)

..... on COMPETITIVE BIDDING

- Assessing the offensive versus defensive potential of a hand is crucial in competitive bidding.
- An opening one-bid will normally contain 4 to 5 offensive tricks and 2 to 3 defensive tricks. Compare your opener with this to assess its offensive versus defensive orientation.
- A more offensive hand contains:
 - more cards in your own suits, and fewer cards in theirs
 - more of your honours in your suits
 - more secondary honours in your suits and more primary honours in theirs
- A more defensive hand is the opposite.
- If the suit in which your honours are located is not known to "belong" to either side, primary honours are defensive and secondary honours are offensive.
- In close decisions, pass the decision to partner, if possible
- It is the partner with length in the enemy trump suit who is best able to judge the combined offensive-defensive potential of his partnership.
- The partner whose hand has been less well defined by the bidding should make the final decision on the contract.

This is the second part to the section on Competitive Bidding and the final article on Rubens' Pearls on Hand Evaluation. It will be brief. The example in the last part covered the strategy of identifying whether the hand you held was more offensive or more defensive and concluded with a hand which, I believe, became ambiguous and needed to pass the final decision to partner whose hand was undefined apart from being weak. Here is my answer to that last exercise.

Answer to Exercise 9:



How many offensive tricks and how many defensive tricks do you estimate this hand will make? Opening bids on average have 4 to 5 offensive tricks and 2-3 defensive tricks. Is it more offensive than defensive versus the norm?

With all vulnerable and you North the bidding proceeds:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1S	2D
Pass	Pass	2S	Pass
Pass	3D	??	

What do you bid?

BD: 23 Dir: S
Vul: ALL

♠ AQJ953
♥ KJT
♦ JT
♣ A8

♠ T86 ♠ K4
♥ AQ84 ♥ 9753
♦ 962 ♦ AKQ54
♣ T76 ♣ 53

♠ 72
♥ 62
♦ 873
♣ KQJ942

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	♠	♥	♦	♣	NT
N	3			3	1
S	3			3	1
E		2	2		
W		2	2		

16 6 12
6

You have about 7 offensive tricks in a spade contract and 3 defensive tricks. The hand is much more offensive than the norm. By the time you have shown a good six card suit and are forced to bid unsupported at the 3-level vulnerable you need to also consider your better than average defensive values. A double could be appropriate leaving your partner the option to make the final decision.

In conclusion, I hope Rubens' insights into refined techniques of hand evaluation will give you extra assistance to enable you to paint a more accurate picture of what a hand is worth in this world of bridge.....Alchemist, February 2022.