

Rubens' Pearls on Hand Evaluation (9)

..... 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.



You are North and the dealer with no-one vulnerable. Bidding:

North	East	South	West
1S	Double	Pass	2C
2S	3H	Pass	Pass
??			

Your hand contains about 6-7 offensive tricks in a spade contract and 2-3 defensive tricks against another contract. It has primary honours in their suits and secondary honours in your long suit. It is clearly an offensive hand. Despite partner showing minimal values it is worth an unsupported 3S bid non-vulnerable.

BD: 17

♠ KJT8542
♥ A
♦ QJ
♣ K62

♠ 973
♥ T3
♦ 8653
♣ AQT3

23/12/21pm

♠ Q6
♥ J8764
♦ T72
♣ J94

Dir: N
Vul: Nil

♠ A
♥ KQ952
♦ AK94
♣ 875

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N				2	1
S				2	1
E	3	4	3		
W	3	4	3		

Here is the full hand. The In-and-Out principle discussed in Rubens' Pearls (5) also applies in Competitive Bidding. "When some of your honours are in your suits and some are in their suits, the more secondary values you have in your suits and primary values you have in theirs, the more offensively oriented your hand" (and vice versa).

This seems counter-intuitive because if you have primary honours in their suits and only secondary in yours, won't you lose too many trump tricks if you play the contract rather than taking tricks off them, in defence, if they play it?

Rubens reasons that, if you and partner have a spade fit, then you are likely to make, for example, 2 defensive tricks against a heart contract if you hold A32 in spades and QJ2 in hearts but only 1 trick in defence if you hold QJ2 in spades and A32 in hearts. In the latter case, the combined length of your spade suit should ensure that you don't lose too many trump tricks even if you are lacking primary honours. However, this length in spades without primary honours reduces its defensive value.

Answer to Exercise 8:

♠ A974
♥ K932
♦ AQ3
♣ K4

West (you)	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	2H(transfer)	Pass
3S (superaccept)	Pass	4C(control bid)	Pass
4D (control bid)	Pass	4S(no heart control)	Pass
4NT(key card ask)	Pass	5H(2 without the QS)	Double
?? What do you bid??			

BD: 7

♠ QJ2	Dir: S
♥ 76	Vul: ALL
♦ J974	
♣ T763	

♠ A974	♠ KT653
♥ K932	♥ Q54
♦ AQ3	♦ K65
♣ K4	♣ AJ

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♠ 8	
♥ AJT8	
♦ T82	
♣ Q9852	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N						4
S						16 13
E	1	3	4	5	3	7
W	1	3	4	5	3	

You have a very clear picture of partner's hand. Her Key Card response tells you that she has the AC and the KS but not the QS. She can't have the AH or else she would have cue bid hearts as a control. You can't count on her having more than 5 x spades and you are going to get a heart lead following South's double. The slam is only going to make if you can find the QS. Even if partner has the JS the odds are no better than 50%. It would be prudent to pass.

BD: 12

♠ KQJ87542	Dir: W
♥ J8	Vul: NS
♦ 4	
♣ KJ	

♠ A93	♠
♥ KT95	♥ 2
♦ AK53	♦ QJT9762
♣ T5	♣ A9432

14/12/21pm

♠ T6	
♥ AQ7643	
♦ 8	
♣ Q876	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N			1	3		11
S			1	3		14 7
E	3	5			4	8
W	3	5			4	

You are East not-vulnerable. Partner opens 1D, most likely 4+ cards and North overcalls 4S. What do you bid?

What would be a perfect minimum hand that your partner might hold to make slam in diamonds? Nothing in spades AH, AD, KD and KC would be perfect and even 7D might be on if he has a doubleton club. A bid of 6D is certainly justified and also supported by the last Ruben principle to be aggressive if your trump holding is strong. (This principle is recommended for bidding in general, not only for slams.)

Exercise 9:

♠ AQJ953
♥ KJT
♦ JT
♣ A8

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?

Answer to Exercise 9:

BD: 23 Dir: S
 Vul: ALL

♠ AQJ953		♠ K4
♥ KJT		♥ 9753
♦ JT		♦ AKQ54
♣ A8		♣ 53
♠ T86		♠ 72
♥ AQ84	23/12/21pm	♥ 62
♦ 962		♦ 873
♣ T76		♣ KQJ942

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N	3			3	1	16
S	3			3	1	6 12
E		2	2			6
W		2	2			

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?

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.