

Tidbit 8

“The one who knows goes”

Interpretation: This idiom relates to the bidding process to reach, hopefully, an optimum contract.

If one partner opens 1NT, for example, she has already defined her hand closely in terms of both HCPs (high card points) and shape. Her partner, the responder, is now “in the know” and may pass or go on bidding in order to place the contract in NT or a suit and at the appropriate level. In general, once one of the partners has defined her hand in terms of point range and distribution, the other is then in a position to determine the eventual contract. It usually takes the opening bidder two bids to give a reasonable picture of their shape and point range. Responder may also define their holding with one bid in NTs or a raise in opener’s suit or, alternatively, make a forcing bid in another suit awaiting opener’s rebid for further clarification.

It is a common failing that one partner, holding a big hand in terms of points and/or distribution, bids to a high level too fast without first understanding fully the potential of their partner’s hand. There are clear rules around which bids and rebids are forcing and if the partnership complies with these, there is never a rush when the partnership has the benefit of the bulk of the HCPs and the assurance of winning the contract.

Example:

BD: 32	♠KT65 ♥QJ853 ♦54 ♣T2	Dir: W Vul: E-W
♠Q87 ♥KT9 ♦2 ♣KQ9843		♠9432 ♥742 ♦JT86 ♣A5
	♠AJ ♥A6 ♦AKQ973 ♣J76	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT	
N	- 3 3 1 -	6
S	- 3 3 1 1	10 5
E	1 - - - -	19
W	1 - - - -	

Let’s assume that West passes as opening bidder but overcalls South’s 1D opening with 2C. North doubles to show both majors. With a strong six card suit, 19HCPs and with partner’s help, including a possible stopper in clubs, South might be tempted to jump straight into a risky 3NT bid. However, she is aware that a 3C bid at this point asks partner directly whether she has a stopper in that suit. Over South’s 3C bid North bids 3H denying a stopper but suggesting a five-card heart suit to go with her four-card spade suit. By taking the bidding slowly, South now knows a lot about the hand. A 3NT contract is very likely to fail. Passing 3H or bidding 4D are possibilities as is bidding 4H.

Exercise:

♠AKJT7
♥J983
♦
♣QT62

You are East with no-one vulnerable. South opens 1D and your partner pre-empts 2S. North bids 3C (forcing). What do you bid?

Answers to Tidbit 7 Exercises:

Questions:

Dummy
J63

You
K10

Exercise 1: You hold only K10. What card do you play now on the lead of the 7 and why?

Exercise 2:

Dummy (North)

♠Q104

♥QJ1085

♦Q7

| ♣K93

You (East)

♠J82

♥963

♦K1082

♣J108

Your partner, West opens 1D, North (dummy) overcalls 1H and you bid 2D. South now bids 2NT passed out. Your partner leads the 5D and declarer plays the 7D from dummy. What do you play?

Answers:

Exercise 1:

Providing the defender's lead is fourth highest, the "Rule of Eleven" will still tell you that declarer has only one card higher than the 7 but now, with the doubleton K10, you should play the K. Otherwise the suit might become blocked. For example, you play the 10 and declarer wins the Q. Now the defence will have to get in, unblock the K and then get back to partner's hand in another suit to play the A and more. If you play the K and it wins and return the 10 to partner's A, she can then clear the suit immediately while she may still have an entry. If declarer holds the A your play of the K will give declarer a second stop with the J but if you play the 10 and declarer wins with the A you still have the blockage and communication issue. If declarer doesn't hold either the Q or the A you will be taking at least three tricks off the top.

Exercise 2:

Using the Rule of 11 will tell you that declarer has only one card higher than the 5. If it is the A, playing the K rather than the 10 will give declarer two tricks in the suit. However, if declarer has the J, playing the 10 will ensure declarer wins one trick even if she has only Jx whereupon she should have lost the first five tricks. What to do? The answer lies in the consideration as to whether declarer would ever bid 2NT with no diamond stop despite both the opponents bidding the suit! Play the 10 with confidence and scratch your head if declarer had bid 2NT on Jx or Jxx.