

Beef Up Your Bidding

♠ 8		♠ KJ764
♥ QJ97		♥ AK3
♦ AKJT6		♦ 87542
♣ K94		♣

You are East, dealer, with N/S vulnerable. You open 1S and your partner bids 2D. What do you rebid to optimise your chance of reaching the best contract of 6D at Matchpoint Pairs?

Thoughts:

You have opened 1S on 11HCPs based on additional length in your suits. One guideline that assists this is the "Rule of 20" whereby your HCPs plus the length of your two longest suits should equal 20 or more to open the bidding.

Your partner's 2D bid has greatly increased the value of your hand to maybe 17-18 Total Points in a diamond contract to the extent that a diamond small slam may be possible. A game in diamonds will not score as well 10 tricks in 3NT at Matchpoint Scoring so how do you find out if partner has clubs stopped so that you can decide whether a NT game or a diamond game or a diamond slam is the best contract? The problem is that your partner has shown only 10 points and maybe as few as 4 x diamonds at this stage of the bidding?

An invitational rebid of 4D would reflect the value of your hand with diamonds as trumps but uses up bidding space as well as bypassing 3NT. A bid of 3D would be encouraging but not forcing. Because partner has opening values herself she will probably bid 3NT on this Board, but do you take any further action? A left-field rebid of 2H keeps the level low and is forcing but misleads your partner on the length of your heart suit. Providing partner has 3 or less hearts it may elicit the required response of NT showing partner has the clubs stopped. Unfortunately, on this Board, partner will rebid 4H most likely forcing you to bid 5D in the hope of stemming the tide.

The 2 over 1 bidding system, which is a slight variant on Standard American, has a clear advantage here because the 2D response is forcing to game and shows a minimum of 12HCPs. The partnership can now explore their joint holdings slowly and fully and maximise the amount of useful information before deciding upon the best contract. A 2 over 1 sequence on this Board may proceed:

East	South	West	North
1S	Pass	2D (game force)	Pass
3D (no need to jump)	Pass	3H	Pass
3S	Pass	3NT	Pass

East rebid 3S, not with any idea of playing there, but to keep the bidding going and elicit more information. From this sequence she can deduce a great deal more information, that West has 4 or more diamonds, 4 x hearts almost certainly including the Q as a NT stopper, a club stopper and probably only 1 x spade, most of which is useful as far as assessing the chances of a diamond slam.

3NT will make as long as the clubs are stopped twice or once only if there are nine tricks off the top. 5D should also make and will only fall short of a 3NT contract if 10 tricks can be made.

As a second step on assessing whether a slam should be bid, East can use the Losing Trick Count to check what level of diamond contract the partnership should reach. She has 6 losers herself and partner's opening points (guaranteed by the 2 over 1 bid) has at most 7 losers. This infers the diamond contract should be at the five level, but because the Losing Trick Count is founded on the basis of an 8-card trump fit, an additional loser can be subtracted when there is at least a 9-card fit making a 6D contract a viable option.

The Board was played on Friday September 11. Of the 17/18 E-W pairs that played the hand, three pairs bid 3NT and got away with making 10 tricks off the top which outscored the six pairs who bid 5D making 12 tricks. One pair who played 2 over 1 bid and made the diamond slam and the rest were in a diamond part score indicating that there is still scope for "beefing up your bidding".

BOARD 2							
BD: 2	♠ AQ953				Dlr: E		
	♥ 862				Vul: NS		
	♦						
	♣ AQ732						
♠ 8				♠ KJ764			
♥ QJ97				♥ AK3			
♦ AKJT6				♦ 87542			
♣ K94				♣			
	♠ T2						
	♥ T54						
	♦ Q93						
	♣ JT865						
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT		
N	2	-	-	-	-	12	
S	2	-	-	-	-	14	11
E	-	6	4	2	1	3	
W	-	6	5	2	4		