

The Aces On Bridge by Bobby Wolff

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The Aces on Bridge: Sunday, January 3, 2010

by Bobby Wolff on January 17th, 2010

Dear Mr. Wolff:

How does the rule of 11 work if your opponents are leading third and lowest (or third and fifth highest)?

– Not Enough Fingers, Durango, Colo.

ANSWER: A fourth-highest lead implies that the leader will hold three cards higher than the one he led: that produces a rule of 11. (Subtract the spot-card value of the card led from 11 to give the number of cards higher than the lead in the other three players' hands.) On a fifth-highest lead use the rule of 10; on what looks like a third-highest lead, subtract the spot-card from 12.

Dear Mr. Wolff:

Second to speak with ♠ J-9, ♥ A-Q-7-3-2, ♦

10-3-2, ♣ Q-7-4, I overcalled one club with one heart. The next hand made a negative double and my partner jumped to three clubs, confusing me no end. Afterwards he said this was what he called a "mixed raise." Have you heard of this call?

– Mixed-Up Kid, Selma, Ala.

ANSWER: A mixed raise is a jump cue-bid in competition, facing an overcall, to show a four-card raise with 6-9 points or so. It is mixed because it has the shape for a pre-emptive raise and the values for a single raise. Since the call has no other useful meaning, it makes good sense to

Dear Mr. Wolff:

I opened one heart and my partner held ♠ 3, ♥

K-J-4, ♦ A-Q-7-3-2, ♣ A-J-4-3. After he responded two diamonds, I rebid my hearts, which was forcing for one round but not to game. How should he develop his hand now? A raise to three hearts would be forcing in our style.

– Linear Progression, Pleasanton, Calif.

ANSWER: The choice is a complex one. The raise to three hearts endplays you if partner just bids game, while a call of three clubs almost denies hearts this good. Best is to jump to three spades instead. Since two spades is natural and forcing, three spades shows a singleton spade and heart support with slam interest. You hope partner will find a cue-bid of a minor-suit king. If he signs off in four hearts, respect his judgment.

Dear Mr. Wolff:

I have been taught that facing an opening bid of one no-trump, Stayman always promises invitational or better values. Is that really true?

– Gate-Crasher, Hartford, Conn.

ANSWER: I prefer to use the sequence of Stayman followed by a rebid of two hearts over two diamonds as weak with both majors, not invitational. All other sequences after Stayman do indeed tend to promise at least invitational values.

play this convention. Discuss it with your partner first.

Dear Mr. Wolff:

What is the right way to ask for aces and then for kings using Gerber?

– Country Clubber, Naples, Fla.

ANSWER: Remember Gerber applies only after an opening or rebid of one or two no-trump. The call of four clubs gets responses of four diamonds for zero or four, and four hearts for one ace, and so on. Now responder's bid of five clubs over the response asks for kings with the same scheme of responses. You can by agreement play Sliding Gerber: instead of five clubs, the cheapest bid over the response asks for kings.

Dear Mr. Wolff:

I did not understand the action taken by my

opponent, who had ♠ A-J-7-3-2, ♥ K-4, ♦ A-K

-Q-7-3, ♣ 2. I opened two hearts, which was passed around to him. He now bid four diamonds and passed his partner's call of four spades, which was made on only a three-card suit. Did I miss something here?

– Lost Contact, Cleveland, Ohio

ANSWER: You should have asked the opponents to explain their methods more fully. I assume that when your RHO bid four diamonds, his partner alerted and explained it as Leaping Michaels, showing diamonds and spades with a two-suiter and was prepared to play game facing a weak hand. The jump cue-bid has no useful alternative meaning, so the convention used by your opponents is growing in popularity.

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