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# Our Readers Ask

Dear Eric,

My question relates to "direct seat" bidding or "free bids." I feel you should have values or even extras if you make free bids in direct seat whether it is your first time to bid or later in the auction.

**OBAR BIDS** ("Opponents bid and raise, bid in direct seat") fall in that category of "direct seat" bidding. For example, do you think it is good idea to bid 2♠ holding:

♠KJ874 ♥3 ♦10983 ♣872

in fourth position after a 1♥ opening and 2♥ raise? Partner could have a hand such as:

♠Q963 ♥AJ10 ♦AJ5 ♣J106

and jump to 4♠, especially if the opening bidder competes to 3♥ pinpointing the heart shortness in your hand.

Vinay Apte

OBAR BIDS is a popular treatment in the modern world, as it's widely considered to be a frequency issue, particularly at pairs. Bidding 2♠ on the hand in question, however, is carrying the concept too far, and I suspect neither Marty Bergen nor Larry Cohen would act with that hand.

As far as more controlled OBAR actions, even at IMPs, there are more

\*6-IMP swings to deal with than games, so it's up to each partnership to discuss the concept thoroughly and agree on the expected minimum for overcalls and takeout doubles in the pre-balancing position.

The same sort of expectations should be discussed for other "free" actions, particularly those where 2NT (good/bad) could be used to describe the other strength types. Most players would rather bid than pass when they have some extra length or support to show, so the integrity of voluntary actions has suffered as a result, but making the same call with both minimum and extra-value hands makes accurate bidding particularly challenging, so you do need to add some science to separate your ranges.

Dear Eric,

In your reply to Cliff Rhein in the April issue of the Bridge Bulletin, you discussed the question of whether this hand:

♠8742 ♥8 ♦AK64 ♣A954

should be opened 1♦ (I wouldn't), but not the other question that was raised, namely, what should be the response of this hand to the fourth-seat opening of 1♠. I would always splinter with 4♥, and have done so in similar situations in the past. The hand is worth 14 points, counting 3 dummy points, and a splinter is the perfect descriptive bid for it. Still, I have run across different opinions and would be much interested to learn your own view.

Case Blaauw

Sure, this is worth a splinter game raise of a first- or second-seat five-card major opening. Your standards for length/strength in fourth seat may affect your choice in such a scenario.

In the Drury methods I favor,

opener can admit to a light opening with four trumps (2♦) or five (2M=opener's major). The 2♦ reply says "weak with four" or at least a normal hand willing to pass 2M or make a variety of game tries. The hook is that if responder bids past 2 on his own, he shows four trumps and a singleton (bidding the short suit). In theory, there are no other hands that will want to go past 2M. Thus, I'd go via Drury and bid 3♥ next if partner doesn't jump to game.

The corresponding gain (if you consider it such) is that when I splinter opposite a possible four-card major opening, I will *always* have at least five trumps and the same revalued "opening" bid you're describing. That fifth trump often makes a difference in handling and helps in possible slams.

Dear Eric,

Sitting North at equal vulnerability, your partner opens 1♥ and your hand is:

♠K72 ♥AQ2 ♦KJ76 ♣Q5

Using standard 2/1 gadgets, this hand is kind of a nightmare. What are the pluses and minuses to each of the following bids?

3NT sounds final and is ambiguous about heart support, but puts the points and general shape about right, plus it protects the kings and queen.

2♦, when followed by a heart rebid, captures the 2/1 aspect and three-card heart support, but distorts the shape of this flat hand that lacks intermediates.

2NT is imaginative, but will at least get some useful information out of partner. If he bids 3♦ to show shortness, you know slam is probably out.

For the more devious among us 2♣ will essentially do the same