The Coolest Gizmos and Gadgets

The magical level

Let's examine two auctions that come up all the time. You probably have never given them much thought because they are so basic. What you may not have realized is that there is a magical quality to these auctions that you may have overlooked. Once you think about it, you will most likely give this concept a nod of approval.

The first auction: You open 1 & or 1 • . Left-hand opponent overcalls 1 • . Partner makes a negative double which, for most players, shows exactly four spades. (You would bid 1 Å with five or more.) The second auction: 1 • by you, LHO overcalls 1 • and partner makes a negative double, which promises 4–4 in the majors. You may not have yet seen the magical quality of these two auctions yet, but you will soon.

Let's start with the negative double of 1♥ showing exactly four spades. When partner makes this negative double, he's essentially bidding 1♠, right? Correct. But he has not actually *made* that bid: He made a negative double which took up no space. Therefore, instead of having to bid 2♠ to raise partner, you can now make the bid that he just

Bridge with the Abbot cont.

on 23 points."

"How ridiculous!" exclaimed Brother Michael. "Did it work out all right?"

"Actually, he was left there and made four overtricks," said Brother Aelred. "There was nothing wrong with the bid, though. Forrester said he would have done the same!" "made," namely, $1 \triangleq$! That's right, you can both legally bid $1 \triangleq$ on the same auction — just not in the same way. (This assumes, of course, that RHO passes). If partner had bid $1 \triangleq$, you would have had to raise him to $2 \triangleq$ if you wanted to raise spades. Hence, we have gained a magical level of bidding room out of thin air because of the negative double, which I highly encourage you and your regular partners to take full advantage of.

Here is how I suggest taking advantage of this extra room. As opener, jump to 2 A with any decent 13 or 14 high-card points hand and four spades. Bid a simple 1 A, however, with either an 11- or 12-point minimum with four spades or — hold on to your hats for this one — a hand without a stopper in hearts and exactly three spades, with no other suitable rebid.

An example: You open 1 & with:

▲AJ2 ♥974 ♦KJ3 ♣A1043.

LHO overcalls 1♥ and partner makes a negative double. You have no quality rebid. 1NT is the right shape, but without a heart stopper? No thanks. Now you can bid 1♠ without fearing partner will fall apart. Partner will know that with a decent opening bid and four spades, you would have jumped to 2♠ to show it. 1♠ is a bit of a warning bid. Why not use it? It is free space. Bidding 1♠ will tell partner you have (a) four spades and a minimum opener or (b) three spades and no heart stopper.

Responder should tread lightly after the 1 \bigstar response. With a game-forcing hand, responder should either jump Billy Miller dearbilly@aol.com

to 3NT (showing a heart stopper and four spades, giving partner a choice of games) or cuebid hearts, asking opener to clarify. If opener then bids notrump, showing a heart stopper, responder can presume opener also has four spades. Without four spades and a heart stopper, he would have bid 1NT in the first place.

In the case that you opened 1 A and LHO overcalled 1 , use the same method when partner doubles, showing both majors. Jump to either two of either major with a four-card fit and an upper range minimum (13–14 HCP). Rebid at the one level, however, with four-card support and a minimum, or a flat hand with three cards in the major and no diamond stopper.

If you were planning to jump to three of partner's major to show a shapely 15–17 HCP hand, that plan has not changed: Jump to three of the major.

Remember, if partner had actually responded one of a major instead of making a negative double, you would always have had to raise to two of the major to support. When these negative double situations come up, a magically available level of free space is created. Why not use it? Magic *is* in the air!

June 2010 BRIDGE BULLETIN 59

