

Bidding Lab

Ideas and innovations from ACBL members



Art by Shane McDermott

Transfer responses to opener's notrump rebids

By Mark Chen

Most players use transfer bids after their partners open 1NT or 2NT. Transfers make it easy for responder to handle a variety of hands, from signoffs to slam tries. They also make the balanced, strong hand the declarer.

Why not extend the concept after the sequence 1minor – 1major; 1NT/2NT? Opener more or less has opened a 12–14 or 18–19 NT. You can play the same two-level transfer bids that you would play if the opening was 1NT: 2♦ shows hearts, 2♥ shows spades, 2♠ shows clubs. You don't need Stayman because opener has denied four-card support for responder's major, so 2♣ becomes a transfer to diamonds. Responder's three- and four-level rebids after opener rebids 1NT remain standard.

Responder shows four-card majors before five-card or longer minors when responding to 1♣/1♦ openings. If opener rebids 1NT, responder transfers to his longest suit as if opener opened 1NT. Opener accepts the transfer in call cases except one: 1♣/1♦ – 1♠; 1NT – 2♦, which asks opener to take a preference between hearts and spades. All responder rebids after opener accepts the transfer are natural and forcing to game except for a 2NT rebid.

These methods can take the place

of new-minor forcing and have several advantages over NMF:

- ♦ Responder can easily show his shape, allowing opener to choose the best game and/or to evaluate slam prospects.
- ♦ Responder can easily handle all hand types (signoff, choice of game, slam invite) opposite 1NT and 2NT rebids.
- ♦ Opener does not have to jump to show a maximum, thus preserving precious bidding room for slam exploration.
- ♦ Opener will be declarer except when the final contract is in responder's major, which will often be advantageous to the declaring side.
- ♦ If there is no eight-card major fit, opener can better conceal his shape, making it more difficult for the opponents to defend notrump contracts.

Let's see the convention in action:

- ♦ 1♦ – 1♠; 1NT – 2♠; 3♣ – 3♦. Responder shows game values and describes a hand with 4=1=3=5, 4=0=4=5 or 4=0=3=6 shape at a low level, offering a choice of games.
- ♦ 1♦ – 1♠; 2NT – 3♥; 3♠ – Pass.

Responder signs off at the three level.

- ♦ 1♦ – 1♠; 1NT – 2♥; 2♠ – 3♣; 3♠. Responder shows five spades and four or more clubs. Opener shows three spades and a maximum. Responder has the entire four level to cuebid if he wishes to make a slam try.
- ♦ 1♦ – 1♠; 1NT – 2♦; 2♥ – Pass. Responder shows five spades and four or more hearts. Opener has a hand that would pass a standard 2♥ by responder. Now, the stronger hand is declarer.
- ♦ 1♦ – 1♠; 1NT – 2♥; 2♠ – 2NT. Responder invites game in spades or notrump without opener having to show four hearts.

I recommend keeping this system on after double but off after any other competition over the 1NT rebid. □

The author is an IT project manager and lives in Herndon VA. His two passions are his family (wife and three daughters ages 6, 4 and 3) and playing bridge. He has made the round of 32 in the unlimited Spingold Knockout Teams winning the 2004 0-5000 GNT, and placing fifth in the 2008 North American Pairs, Flight A