

# Captaincy

On a ship, there is one person in charge. He gives the orders and his orders are obeyed. He can delegate responsibility but ultimately, the captain's decision is final.

Here we shall be talking about captaincy in the bidding

The captain is generally the player who has more information.

Often it will be responder as he gets to know more about opener's hand sooner.

When a player makes a limit bid, his partner becomes captain

In some 2/1 auctions where both hands are unlimited, captaincy may not be obvious

# Captaincy

If you are captain, you can do as you please. You can describe your hand accurately or you can intentionally misdescribe your hand.

The only requirement is that it works.

As captain, it is your job to picture partner's hand and choose the best approach

If you bring partner into the loop and pass the decision to him, you must make sure he will be making the right decision

If you are captain, you run the ship. You are not responsible to anyone. Your job is to get to the right contract.

# Captaincy

As an illustration of the options of the captain, suppose partner opens 2NT showing 20-22.

Responder might bid:

3C Stayman

3 red Transfers – perhaps  
to be followed by a new  
suit

3S for minors

3NT

4C Gerber

4 red Transfers

4NT Quantitative

Opener generally obeys orders or may be asked to choose

Responder is always Captain – sometimes he delegates responsibility

# Captaincy

Q1 Pass whatever your hand is. When you open a weak 2, partner is captain. You have no idea what his hand is:

With KQxx Axxx Ax QTx he expected to make 4H, but the penalty from 4S will be greater. Double is obvious.

With Kxx KTxx AKxx Qx he bid 4H to make (it might not) but surely 4S is going down. Double is the choice.

With xx AJxx ATx K9xx he took a gamble with 4H (it probably wouldn't make) 5H is probably 2 off. Pass and hope 4S fails

With x KJxx Axxx xxxx, 4S is a certain make and 5H should be a decent save. Opponents might take the push to 5S, which might go down. Bid 5H

With xx KQxx Qxxxx x 5H will be too expensive and opponents may have a slam. Just pass

## Captaincy

Q2 Partner has shown a minimum hand with diamonds. You want to play in 4S so just bid it.

What if partner holds x Kxxx KQJxxx Kx?  
Where do you want to play?

You don't need to describe your hand, you don't need to bring partner into the loop. You may even get a favourable heart lead.

## Captaincy

Q3 South's 2H was a limiting call, putting North in the captain's chair. By making a splinter, he has brought you in to the loop. You have a terrific hand – no club wastage, some club length that can be ruffed, great trumps. What approach do you take?

Most players would be concerned about the lack of diamond control and they might start with a 4S cue bid. This could lead to some confusion and difficulty in getting to the right contract.

You don't need to worry about the diamonds. North knows more about the hand than South does and has made a descriptive slam try. Don't try to picture partner's cards – your own hand tells you a diamond control can't be a problem. Just bid 4NT RCKB and bid the slam if not off 2 Aces. If North has 3 key cards you can follow with 5NT and may be able to bid a grand slam.

## Captaincy

Q4 You have about the best hand you could have to have bid 2S. When you bid 2S, you made partner captain. If he had any interest in game, he could have made a game try. He didn't and his 3S bid is just competitive. You must pass. Bidding 4S is mutiny.

While you would co-operate with partner if he asks your opinion, when he doesn't ask for an opinion, you are not supposed to give one.

# Captaincy

Q5/6 These 2 hands show the difference between making a descriptive call and gathering information.

You are captain. You can transfer captaincy by making a splinter bid. Will this work?

Suppose partner holds AJxxx KQx KJxx x

Q5

A 4H splinter will cause him to downgrade his hand and he will not progress yet 6S is not bad. The key is partner's singleton club. You know a minor suit singleton is good so you should retain captaincy with a Jacoby 2NT bid.

Q6

This is the hand on which to make a splinter. You don't need a short minor in partner's hand, you need no wastage in hearts. The splinter will alert partner to value his minor suit Queens and devalue the QH. Partner must make the decision here since you can't gather the information to make the right decision yourself.

A good captain knows when to delegate.

## Captaincy

Q7 Should you override partner and bid 4S (which must be fairly cheap)?

No – partner is captain. He is saying he can beat 4H in his own hand. You must pass whatever your hand is. It is important that partner doubles when he can beat the contract to stop you taking a phantom save.

Understanding the implications of captaincy is vital for good partnership bidding. If both players try to make decisions, things get fouled up. If neither makes a decision, the auction never ends sensibly. Someone has to guide the ship and that is the captain's job.