

Reversing the norm . . .

ONE thing that people struggle with for little reason is the mysterious sequence of bidding known as a 'reverse'. One of the reasons for this is that no-one knows why it is called a reverse – perhaps the reason is that you bid your suits the other way round to usual.

What is a reverse? It is where you re-bid a second suit that is higher ranking than your first suit, which takes you past the safety net of your original suit – sometimes called 'going through the barrier'.

This would be a classic example:

Hand 1

♠ 3
♥ A Q 9 5
♦ K Q 8 6 4
♣ A Q 3

You open 1♦ and when partner bids 1♠, you rebid 2♥. Note that to put you back to your first suit (diamonds) as partner might often want to do, he has to go to the three level. It is a good thing then that you have extra values (16+) as partner may only have 6 or 7 points and you will need them all to make nine tricks!

Let's change the hand slightly:

Hand 2

♠ 3
♥ K J 9 5
♦ K Q 8 6 4
♣ K J 3

I mentioned before about 'going through the barrier'. What is this strange barrier I speak of? Of course it is invisible and metaphorical, and is represented by two of your original suit. So if you have opened 1♣ then the barrier is 2♣, and a rebid of a new suit that takes you past 2♣ is a reverse, otherwise it is not:

Hand 3

♠ A Q 5 4
♥ K J
♦ 8 4
♣ Q J 7 4 3

Here you open 1♣ and partner bids 1♦. It is fine to rebid 1♠ as, although spades are the higher ranking suit, it doesn't take you past the barrier of 2♣ and if

partner is weak you will be able to stop low.

What if partner has responded at the two level – is it the same? You hold this hand:

Hand 4

♠ A Q J 5
♥ K 8 6 4 3
♦ Q J 2
♣ 2

You open 1♥ and partner bids 2♣; what do you do now?

You mustn't rebid 2♣, as that is a reverse, and if partner is minimum once again you will be committed to the three

level. The correct rebid is 2♥ – the suit isn't brilliant and if it turns out partner has a poor hand and leaves you in 2♥ you may struggle, but it is better than overbidding on a misfit, and getting far too high.

What about if your rebid would be at the three level? You hold the following hand:

Hand 5

♠ K 3
♥ A Q 6 5 3
♦ 7 3
♣ K J 6 5

You open 1♥ and partner bids 2♦; what now?

If you show your second suit by bidding 3♣, then again you take your side past the barrier of 2♥ and you are showing a good hand.

You need extra values to make this bid – called a 'high-level reverse' – about 16 points. While a normal reverse is forcing, but not forcing to game, a high-level reverse is forcing to game, since partner has shown 9+ points by responding at the two level.

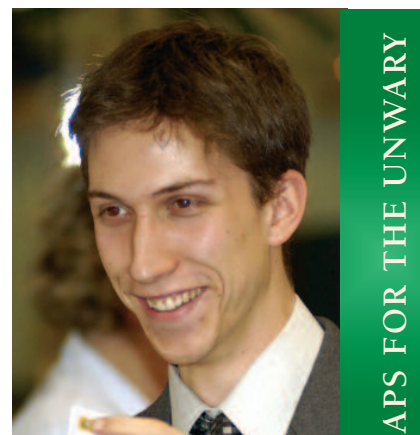
This raises an important point: when you make a reverse bid, partner isn't allowed to pass it. There are various weak responses he can make, either by bidding 2NT to show a poor hand with a stopper in the unbid suit, by giving preference back to your first suit, or rebidding his own suit. Each of those bids shows 5-7 points and can be passed by opener if he is minimum.

Opener

1♣
2♥
Pass

Responder

1♠
2NT



Michael Byrne

TRAPS FOR THE UNWARY

Responder has little fit for clubs or hearts, a spade suit that he can't rebid, and a stopper in diamonds.

Opener

1♣
2♦
3♣

Responder

1♥
2♥
Pass

Responder shows a poor hand with a re-biddable heart suit (at least five-card long) but opener isn't interested and rebids his club suit to show six (he has already shown a five-card suit by reversing).

Let's review some dos and don'ts of reversing:

Do:

- Make sure you have 16+ points when you make a reverse bid (Hand 1).
- Make sure you are at least 5-4 when you reverse; balanced hands with two four-card suits should either open or re-bid no trumps.
- Show your second suit on weak hands if doing so doesn't take you past the barrier; for example: 1♣ – 1♥ – 1♠ (Hand 3).

Don't:

- Reverse on weak hands just because partner has bid at the two level – you still need extra values (Hand 4).
- Make a high-level reverse by going to the three level unless you are prepared to play in game once partner has responded at the two level (Hand 5).
- Forget to make a weak response to a reverse if you have a bad hand.