

The minors in the contested auction.

My last article took a look at the minors when responder is weak but feels that something could be done to upset the opponents. However, we can afford to be a little more adventurous when opener's left hand opponent enters the auction immediately. If we look again at the example in the last article and change the auction slightly, we could have :-

North		South	
♠	AQJ	♠	K863
♥	742	♥	9
♦	KQ109	♦	872
♣	632	♣	J10975

North	East	South	West
1♦	Double	1♠	Double
1NT	Double	2♣	Double

This does not look any different except that East had enough to double for take-out immediately and the result was about the same as before and, in this case, the opponents might continue to bid and might find their best contract. But the difference is that opener does not have to think about whether responder is weak or strong, he knows that he is weak. If I was in the North seat, I might even raise 2♣ to 3♣ if either opponent decided to actually bid a suit over 2♣.

But we can do better than that. If you remember from a previous article, I used a system of transfers when 1 of a major was doubled for take-out, and the same system with some modification can be used here. So, after 1♦ is doubled, responder bids :-

- 1) Pass shows 4+ diamonds and a weak hand, or any hand that responder would be happy to play in diamonds below game level.
- 2) Redouble shows that we have the balance of power. Both partners should co-operate in an attempt to double the opponents for penalties when they take the redouble out but, if responder bids a suit later, he has at least invitational values and a 5+ card suit. Responder might also have a balanced hand and may bid no trumps on the next round.
- 3) 1♥ shows a weak hand with a 4+ card suit and there may be a longer suit.
- 4) 1♠ shows a weak hand with a 4+ card suit and there may be a longer minor suit.
- 5) 1NT is a transfer to clubs and could be weak or strong.
- 6) 2♣ is a transfer to diamonds and could be weak or strong.
- 7) 2♦ is a transfer to hearts and could be weak or strong.
- 8) 2♥ is a transfer to spades and could be weak or strong.
- 9) 2♠ shows a weak hand with at least 5-5 distribution in the minors.
- 10) 2NT is invitational to 3NT. Opener passes with a minimum or shows a stopper or bids to 3NT with a maximum.
- 11) All higher bids are pre-emptive.

This is slightly different from when the opening bid is a major because, in my system, 1♦ can be bid with no diamonds at all so there is no value or pre-emptive raise available. But it does allow

responder the opportunity to compete whether he is weak or strong. If you play a system whereby at least one of the two 1-level minor suit opening bids actually guarantees 4 or more cards, then something similar to the system shown for use with major suits could be appropriate but, if you have one minor opening bid, or both, that shows less than 4 cards in the suit, this table above will work well.

Of course, if 1 of a major is overcalled, this type of system will not work but, over an opening bid of 1 of a minor, we can deal with an overcall of 1 of a major in a very similar way. So, if 1♦ is overcalled by 1♥, responder bids :-

- 1) Pass shows no interest in competing at this time.
- 2) Double is Sputnik-like showing either (a) 4 cards in spades and a minor with about 8 or more points, or (b) a stronger hand shown by bidding a 5+ card suit, or no trumps at the appropriate level, on the next round.
- 3) 1♠ shows a weak hand with 4+ spades and there might be a longer suit.
- 4) 1NT is a transfer to clubs and could be weak or strong.
- 5) 2♣ is a transfer to diamonds and could be weak or strong.
- 6) 2♦ is a transfer to spades and could be weak or strong.
- 7) 2♥ is forcing to game and asks opener to bid 2♠ with a 4-card suit. The bid could also be looking for 3NT and opener should bid no trumps with a heart stop.
- 8) 2♠ is pre-emptive.
- 9) 2NT is a weak hand with 5 or more cards in both minors.
- 10) A jump in a new suit is pre-emptive.

There is a slight change required if the overcall was 1♠. In that case, 2♣ is a transfer to hearts, 2♥ is pre-emptive and 2♠ is the game force.

We are at a disadvantage when we hold minor suits, but these methods at least give us a better chance of competing successfully. Here is another of my favourite deals :-

North		South	
♠	A4	♠	K86
♥	KJ	♥	10953
♦	Q10942	♦	8
♣	Q642	♣	J10975

North	East	South	West
1♦	1♥	1NT	pass
2♣	2♥	pass	3♥
Pass	4♥		

This might seem to be a very strange auction because they ended up in 4♥ on a 5-2 fit, but it did happen. The problem was that East held 5 hearts and 4 spades and West's best suit was diamonds. Therefore, West was reluctant to bid 2♦ over 1NT and he could not double 1NT for take-out so he waited to see what would happen on the next round. East did not want to let 2♣ become the final contract but he was not strong enough to reverse into 2♠, so he rebid his 5-card heart suit. West finally came alive, but he had no way to bid the spades either, so they ended up in 4♥. 4♠

could have been made losing just 2 spade tricks and a heart but 4♥ had no chance on a spade lead and continuation. Declarer lost 2 spades and a spade ruff and then a natural trump trick later in the South hand.

If you are thinking that South would be more likely to lead the diamond singleton, you are probably correct, most of the time. It is rarely a good idea to lead a singleton when you hold 4 trumps. If we are to make a ruff, we need to make it in the short trump hand because a ruff in the long trump hand is unlikely to make us an extra trick. It is better to keep the 4 trumps to embarrass declarer. I also discounted the club suit because it looked as if I might be jeopardising a possible king of clubs in partner's hand so, as this occurred in a match, I led the 6 of spades. However, 4♥ had no chance no matter what I led. They had 4 losers in the majors, we had forced them to get too high. As it happens, 3NT had a better chance of success.