

## **What's It All About?**

by Bill Segraves

### **Transfer Response Systems**

If you've been playing in open events in the New York – Southern New England corridor, you've probably run into at least some pairs who play any one of a family of systems that include transfer responses to their 1C opening bids. Here, I'll answer some questions you might have about things including why they do that and what you might want to do in defense to it.

#### **Why do they do it?**

It's basically for the same reason you play transfers in response to a 1NT opening bid. Most of their 1C opening bids are balanced hands that are not in their 1NT opening bid range and they're setting things up to have the same kinds of auctions you have after you open 1NT. While it's true that transfers are often good at getting the "right" hand to be declarer, the real advantage comes from the fact that you can put hands of all ranges into the transfer. The transfer bidder will always get to bid again, so they can initiate the transfer sequence with anything ranging from a very weak hand that intends to pass a simple transfer acceptance to a hand strong enough to force to slam.

#### **Is it allowed?**

Yes, it's allowed in any tournament event with an upper masterpoint limit above 3000. Clubs have wide discretion to decide what's allowed in their clubs, but most clubs do tend to allow this in their open games. Players who play that their 1C bid could be made with only 2 clubs (other than with 4-4 in the majors and 3 diamonds) should pre-alert and announce that the 1C opening bid may be short. There is not an ACBL requirement for them to pre-alert that they play transfer responses, but many pairs do pre-alert this as a courtesy, and they must of course announce the transfers when they occur, just as you announce your transfers in response to a 1NT opening bid.

#### **What kind of hand can responder have?**

When making a 1-level transfer to hearts or spades, responder shows at least 4 cards in the major suit they are transferring to. Responder's rebids will continue the description of responder's hand. In most of these transfer systems, responder doesn't necessarily show any minimum point count, just as your transfer responses to 1NT don't show any points.

#### **How will opener rebid?**

Depending on the specific system and partnership agreements, accepting the transfer at the 1-level may show either a "weak notrump" hand with 3 card support or a minimum hand with either 2 or 3 card support. In most of these systems, with 4 card support, opener will normally jump and accept the transfer at the 2 level.

#### **How do I defend against this system?**

There's really not all that much to defend against as long as you understand the auction and have a few basic agreements.

First, you may already have agreements about what your “cuebid” shows after a minor suit opening that could be short; it is a feature of many systems that a 1C or 1D opening bid could be as short as 2, or in some cases even fewer (e.g., some Precision players’ 1D opening may not promise any diamonds at all). If not, then you and your partner will want to discuss whether the auction (1C) 2C is natural, showing clubs, or something like Michaels, showing both majors.

Second, you’ll want to have an agreement about what you play when they make a transfer bid, such as when it goes (1C) P (1H). A simple, intuitive way to play this is to play it very much as you would play when the opponents open 1NT and transfer, with double showing the suit they actually bid and with a bid of the suit responder is showing as takeout of that suit. So on the auction (1C) P (1H), X would show hearts and 1S would be a takeout double of spades (showing hearts and the minor suits). Some pairs have more complex agreements, but it’s really not necessary to get fancy (I play this simple version with most of my own partners). You’ll also want to have an agreement about what a double by you would mean when the response is instead 1S, which in most of these systems is kind of a catch-all bid denying a 4 card major. You may already have (and if not, I would suggest you do) that doubles of artificial bids show that suit, unless you have a specific agreement to the contrary, so if it goes (1C) P (1S), X would show spades – the same kind of hand on which you would have been content to make a 1S overcall.

The third thing you’ll want to keep in mind is that even when both opponents are bidding they may not necessarily have the majority of the high card points (remember that responder didn’t show any points), so don’t be shy about bidding when you have a hand that would bid against a more standard auction. It’s really important to have some way of showing good balanced hands; for most pairs, this will best be accomplished by playing a natural ~ 15-18 HCP overcall by unpassed hands (see CBA Ask the Experts Volume 1, Number 6 for more discussion about natural versus “sandwich” 1NT overcalls) and by striving to get back into the auction when the opponents attempt to stop in 1 of a suit.

That’s pretty much all you need to know to play your best bridge when the opponents are playing transfers!

### **Should I play it myself?**

It’s a fun and effective system, but it does take some work, so I wouldn’t necessarily advise taking it on unless you’re in a serious partnership that’s ready to put in the time. If you are, <http://bridge.mgoetze.net/21twalsh.pdf> has a description of one version of a transfer-based system called T Walsh that can get you started!

If there are other things you’d like to see addressed in “What’s That About,” please write to Bill Segraves at [bridgewithbill@gmail.com](mailto:bridgewithbill@gmail.com).