9. - Partner opened on a balanced hand – Teachers' notes

Context

Opener has shown the balanced nature of his hand and a specified points range in one or two bids.

This topic is primarily about what responder does next.

Responder controls the auction

Once opener has shown the nature and strength of his hand responder is in control of the auction.
In particular, if you want to be in a game contract do not make a bid which can be passed;
and if you do not want to be in a game contract then do not make a bid which forces too high.

Opener's bidding – style notes

5-3-3-2 hands in the 12-14 or 20-22-point ranges are opened with 1NT or 2NT respectively, even with a five-card major.

4-4-3-2 hands in the 15 - 19-point range should open 1♥ with Hearts and Spades, and one of the major with a major and a minor.

The 1NT rebid

I am teaching the 1NT rebid as '15 to 17' in the modern style.
An older standard was to teach the range as '15 or 16'.
15 – 17 is a better method, mainly because the 19-point hand can now be shown with a 2NT rebid leaving bidding space to search for a superior 5-3 major suit fit, but also because it allows responder a little more leeway with his first response at the 1-level.
However, you might find it preferable to teach the older version simply because that is what everyone else in the local clubs play.

Conventions

No artificial conventions are employed at this stage.
Stayman and transfers can wait for an improvers' course.
4NT following a balanced auction in which a suit has not been agreed should be quantitative searching for the magical 33 points for a small slam and inviting opener to choose between Pass and 6NT.

Responding to 1NT

A new suit at the two-level is a weak take-out on at least a 5-card suit, and is usually the right option on a weak hand.
A new suit at the three-level is a natural game force, again promising at least a 5-card suit.

Responding to 2NT

A new suit at the three-level is game-forcing, asking opener to choose between 3NT and game in the suit.

Limitations

Note that at this point in our teaching, and in the absence of Stayman and transfers, there are no invitational sequences showing a 5-card or longer major in response to 1NT,
and there are no weak or invitational responses (other than pass) in response to 2NT.