6 - Opening balanced hands - Teacher's notes

Objectives

Learn how opener shows various point-ranges on balanced hand-shapes.

Emphasis

The emphasis should be on determining the hand-type first according to the shape.
Too many learners get hold of 12 - 14 and then open any hand in that range with 1NT for evermore.

Responder

direct raises - based on total points - responder determines the final contract.
(NB - 25 for 3NT - stop low with anything less than this.)
You may choose to extend your methods to weak take-outs in all four suits (with a warning that things will change from hand 4 onwards).

Implementation

Introduce the point ranges and hand out the summary sheet.
Read through, and then encourage not to look at it till they get home.
Play the set hands.

Style choices

In the commentary and on the summary sheet I have assumed particular styles in two common situations.

For a 1NT rebid I have chosen the modern standard of '15 to 17'.
A rebid of 2NT following a response at the one-level will therefore show '18 or 19'. This is superior to the older method in that it is far easier to search for contracts other than 3NT on 19-point hands.

However the older standard of '15 or 16' is still common-place in many clubs. For this reason you might choose to teach the older method. My preference is to show the way forward.

Secondly, with a major and a minor I open one of the major.
Opening one of the minor is frequently taught. This is to an extent a hand-me-down from the days of five-card majors, but both styles are widespread in the modern game.

Choose the methods you wish to teach and be consistent.
If they differ from my choices then you will need to modify the summary sheet accordingly.

Planning the play

Continue to emphasise the initial 'pause and plan'.

In no trumps the emphasis will be on setting up long suits and maintaining entries before cashing winners.

Ongoing themes

Continue:-

- scoring, including game and part-score bonuses;
- 2nd player plays low etc.;
- reading partner's and declarer's hand and strategy.