Reverse bidding - Commentary

These notes are based around the assumption that you will play 'strong reverses' - requiring a minimum of 16 points and forcing for 1-round when partner's first response is at the 1-level, and requiring a minimum of 15 points and game-forcing when partner's first response is at the 2-level.

Hand 1

Not strong enough to reverse

A weak reverse takes the auction too high.

With 13 points and 5-4 shape North opens 1♦ hoping to introduce the hearts later.

South will bid 1♠ (not strong enough for 2♣), and with insufficient to reverse North must rebid 2♦ to end the auction.

I don't interfere with these EW hands – poor suit quality from East and wrong shape for a double from West.

2♦ makes 8 tricks and 1NT makes 7 tricks, both for a score of 90.

If EW enter the fray, they might bid to 2♥ which makes 7 tricks for an excellent loss of 50 unless doubled.

Note that a weak reverse of 2♥ by North will lead to a contract of 2NT or 3♦, each of which is 1 too high.

Hand 2

Not strong enough to reverse

Weak reverse leads to a makeable part-score – but one level higher.

East opens 1♣ hoping to rebid 1♥ and West responds 1♠.

North should think twice about overcalling on a five-card suit at the two-level vulnerable.

If he passes East is not strong enough to reverse and so must rebid 2♣ where the auction should end.

If North comes in with 2♦ at any stage East might consider a negative double to which West might respond with any one of pass, 2NT or 3♣.

2NT can be made from the West seat and 3♣ by either E or W.

In diamonds EW can take 6 tricks in the side suits and 1 trump trick whether declaring or defending. North did well to remain silent.

Note that a weak reverse of 2♥ by East will lead to a final contract of either 2NT by West or 3♣ by East, both of which make.

Hand 3

Not strong enough to reverse

Weak reverse leads to the same makeable contract, but fortunate to find partner with extra.

South opens 1♥ hoping to rebid 2♣ and North responds with 2♦.

South must rebid 2♥ and North will bid either 2NT with his dodgy club holding or stretch to 3♣ (4th suit). In either case South bids 3NT.

No Trumps make 10 tricks – the only making game. Note that if South makes a weak reverse of 3♣ then the final contract will be the same, but he was fortunate to find partner with 12 points.

Reverse bidding - Commentary

Hand 4

Not strong enough to reverse

Weak reverse might lead to the best contract, but most auctions lead to 1 down.

West opens 1♦ hoping that partner might respond in hearts, North chooses not to overcall vulnerable on a low point count and a poor suit, East responds with 1♠, and South now passes.

If West rebids 2♦ with just 15 points this will probably end the auction.

West might reasonably upgrade his hand by a point because of the red suit quality and reverse with 2♥, and East may well be tempted to 3NT.

No trumps make 8 tricks and diamonds 7.

If West can find the upgrade and East can curb his enthusiasm then 2NT will earn them the best score. Any other scenario is likely to lead to one down.

Hand 5

Not strong enough to reverse

A weak reverse will take the contract one too high.

North opens 1♥, hoping that partner might introduce spades, and South, with insufficient strength to bid clubs at the 2-level, bids 1NT, showing 6-9 points and denying 4 spades.

West passes with a good, but defensive, hand, and with only 12 points South is more likely to revert to 2♥ than leave it in 1NT.

2♥ and 2♠ each make 8 tricks. No trumps make 7 tricks.

Hand 6

No need to reverse or jump with 17 points.

No difference playing weak reverses.

East is strong enough for a reverse sequence, but the shape is wrong and such a sequence is unnecessary. He opens 1♥, West responds 1♠, and East responds 2♦ (note that 19 points is the usual requirement for a game-forcing jump with no fit located) implying 5 hearts and 4 diamonds.

West can now see an 8-card heart fit and must show his 11 points with an invitational jump to 3♥. East might start looking for a slam at this point but will probably just raise to game.

Alternatively West might rebid 2NT which East will again raise to game.

4♥ is the optimum contract for EW making 11 tricks. 3NT makes 10 tricks.

Hand 7

16 points, but not a reversing shape

No difference playing weak reverses.

S and W each pass, and N opens 1♣, South responds with 1♦ and North rebids 1♠ (suggesting but not quite promising 5 clubs and 4 spades and about 11 – 18 points. With a 4-4 fit and 10 points South jumps to 3♠ which North raises to game.

4♠ makes 11 tricks – the only making game.

Reverse bidding - Commentary

Hand 8

With 19 points opener can show his strength with a game-forcing jump rebid in a new suit. No difference playing weak reverses.

West opens 1♥, East responds 1♠ and West makes a game-forcing jump rebid of 3♦ showing his 5-4 shape. East has little choice but to rebid 3NT.

No trumps make 10 tricks – the only making game. (Diamonds make 10 tricks).

There are 7 top tricks in the majors thanks to the Heart break. Note that if declarer wants to make more than 2 spade tricks, he might have to take the first heart in the West hand, or overtake the ♣Q with the ♣K to ensure a second entry.

Hand 9

Natural strong reverse

Playing weak reverses, the sequence is different but the end contract should be the same.

North opens 1♦, South responds 1♠, and with 16 points North makes a natural strong reverse rebid of 2♥- forcing for one round.

Playing strong reverses South must ensure that game is reached either by jumping to 3NT or (better) by bidding 3♣ (the 4th suit) hoping to put the declarer play into the North hand.

Playing non-strong reverses South will bid an invitational 2NT which North will raise to game.

Declarer can see 10 tricks, but an early attack on spades by the defence will see them take 4 tricks first leaving just 9 for the contract – again, the only making game.

Hand 10

Natural strong reverse

Playing a weak reverse might come to the same result, but both partners are on a bit of a guess.

East opens 1♥ and West responds 2♦.

15 points would be sufficient for a reverse facing the 2-level change of suit, and so East rebids a natural and game-forcing 3♣. West must now choose between a 4th suit 3♠ lacking even a partial stop and a 2-card support bid of 3♥. East is likely to raise either of these to game, although he might choose 3NT over 3♥.

Hearts make 10 tricks and no trumps make 9 tricks.

Playing a weak reverse West has to make a decision based on insufficient information, but will probably bid a non-committal 3♥ passing the buck back to East.

Hand 11

Not strong enough to reverse

A weak reverse will probably lead to the same contract but could take the auction one too high.

South opens 1♣ and North responds 1♠. South is not strong enough to reverse and so rebids 2♣. North will probably stretch to 2NT which South should pass at pairs scoring but may well raise to game in teams scoring.

NS can make 8 tricks in either hearts or no trumps.

A weak reverse is likely to lead to 2NT or 3♣ (both making) but could also take the auction one too high.

Reverse bidding - Commentary

Hand 12

15-point reverse facing a 2-level response.

No difference playing weak reverses.

W and N pass.

East opens 1♠ and West responds 2♦. 15 points are sufficient to reverse over a 2-level response, and so East rebids 3♣ (game-forcing). East will probably produce a 4th suit bid of 3♥ and East will almost certainly bid 3NT.

Declarer will take 9 tricks in no trumps although 4♠ takes 10 tricks for a marginally better score.

The sequence will be identical playing weak reverses.

Hand 13

Natural strong reverse

Paying weak reverses NS might well reach a different contract, but 1 down is still the most likely outcome.

North opens 1♦, South responds 1♠ and North makes the natural strong reverse rebid of 2♥.

South might well be tempted to 4♠ on a hand which is potentially 7 loser and a likely 9 facing 16 points, but the poor quality of the suit should indicate a degree of caution. A bid of 3♠ seems likely. North will surely raise to 4♠.

It matters not. Spades are making 9 tricks and no trumps are making 8 tricks.

Quite simply, declarer cannot avoid 2 spade losers to go with his 2 heart losers.

Paying weak reverses South will probably rebid 2♠, to which North will respond 2NT and South will raise to game.

Hand 14

Not strong enough to reverse

A weak reverse takes the auction too high.

East opens 1♥, West responds 1NT and East must choose between pass and 2♥ ending the auction in both cases.

Hearts make 8 tricks and no trumps make 7 tricks.

Playing a weak reverse opener will rebid 2♠ and West will probably show preference to 3♥ although pass is also possible albeit a little supine. Both contracts are 1 too high.

Hand 15

Not strong enough to reverse

Probably the same outcome with a shape-showing reverse.

South opens 1♦.

If West passes then North will respond 2♣ and South will rebid 2♦ which will probably end the auction. If North chooses to rebid 2NT South will probably revert to 3♦.

Alternatively West might overcall with 1♥. and North will again respond 2♣, only this time East will make a 'level of fit' raise to 3♥.

Diamonds make 9 tricks, spades and clubs each make 8 tricks and no trumps make 7 tricks.

Against 3♦, 3♥ going two off is an excellent sacrifice unless NS can find the penalty double.
Playing a shape-showing reverse South will rebid 2♠, North will probably rebid 2NT and South is likely to correct to 3♦.

Hand 16

Not strong enough to reverse
Weak reverse is likely to take the contract 1 too high.
West opens 1♣, East responds 1♠, and West rebids 2♣ to end the auction.
Alternatively West opens 1NT to avoid the reversing problem, which is passed out.
1NT and 2♣ both make exactly for the same score, as does 2♦.
Playing a non-strong reverse opener rebids 2♦ and responder must choose between pass and 3♣. In this case the opening of 1NT is far preferable.

Hand 17

No reverse involved.
North could pass with all his points in the short suits but will probably open 1♠.
East keeps a straight face and passes, and South bids 1NT. North will rebid 2♣, East maintains his straight face, and South shows preference to 2♠ to end the auction.
The optimum contract is 2NT making 8 tricks, but 2♠ and 3♦ come a close 2nd and 3rd making 8 and 9 tricks respectively.

Hand 18

No reverse involved.
East opens 1♥, West responds 1♠, and East rebids 2♦.
West must now try to keep the bidding open in case partner holds 17 or 18 points, which he does with a simple preference bid of 2♥.
East can now show his extra values in a hand as balanced as it can be with 2NT, which West will raise to 3NT.
No trumps make 9 tricks – the only making game.

Hand 19

Natural strong reverse.
Weak reverse reaches the same contract but with less certainty.
South opens 1♦, North responds 1♠ and South rebids 2♥.
North can now see his way to game and could just jump to 3NT but will probably bid 3♣ (4th suit) to put the play in the South hand.
Facing a non-strong reverse North should keep the auction open with a false preference bid of 3♦ and South will almost certainly bid 3NT hoping that partner has a bit more than a minimum response at the 1-level.
No trumps makes 9 tricks from North or South – no other strain gets past 8 tricks.

Reverse bidding - Commentary

Hand 20

No reverse involved.

West passes and North opens 1♣. South responds 1♦ and North rebids 1♠.

South must show preference with 2♣. With 17 points North now bids 2♥ showing his 17 or 18 points and 5-4-3-1 shape. Note that this bid is forcing but not game-forcing as it would have been on responder's rebid as he has already declined the opportunity to force (say 19+) on his previous bid. South bids 3NT with 8 points facing 17 and something in every suit.

In practice declarer will usually make 9 tricks losing just 3 aces and the ♦K, but if the defence make an early attack on diamonds and allow North's singleton A to take no prisoners then it can be held to 8 tricks.

Hand 21

Not strong enough to reverse

Weak reverse is likely to take the contract too high.

North opens 1♠, South responds 2♥, and North can do no better than 2♠. South will probably have a further go with 2NT which North should pass at pairs scoring.

Playing a shape-showing reverse North will rebid 3♦ and South might just revert to 3♠ but is more likely to bid 3NT.

3♠ and 3♥ each make 9 tricks. No trumps makes 8 tricks – there are no making games.

Hand 22

No reverse involved.

East opens 1♥, and South will almost certainly overcall 1NT.

West might try a pushy 2♠ or a rather supine pass, but my choice would be a penalty double.

What happens next will depend on what escape manoeuvres NS have up their sleeves.

If they can find their way into 2D or 2S then they will make 7 tricks for a loss of 50 or 100 if doubled. 1NTx dies a rather nasty death.

Meanwhile EW can make 8 tricks in no trumps

Hand 23

Natural strong reverse.

Weak reverse reaches the same contract but with less certainty.

South opens 1♣. North probably responds 1♠ (many would respond 1♥ on this hand on the grounds that it is only worth 1 bid), and with 18 points South makes the strong reverse of 2♦ promising 16+ points and forcing for 1 round. North must choose between 2NT, 3♣, and 2♠. South might make a further effort with 3♥ showing his 5-4-3-1 shape and 17 or 18 points (provided it is not played as game-forcing following the reverse, and North will do well to pass this bid.

Playing a weak reverse North must show preference to 3♣ on his rebid and the auction will continue as above.

Hearts make 9 tricks, no trumps, spades and clubs each make 8 tricks. South will do well to show his hand and stay out of game.

Reverse bidding - Commentary

Hand 24

Not strong enough to reverse.

Weak reverse reaches the same contract but with less certainty.

West opens 1♦ hoping to rebid in spades, East responds 2♣ and West can do no better than rebid his diamonds. East might have a further go with either 2NT or 3♦ but West has no more to say.

Playing a weak reverse the auction will start 1♦, 2♣, 2♠ and the auction will then continue as above.

Diamonds makes 10 tricks; clubs make 9 tricks; whilst no trumps can be held to 7.