Reverse bidding – teacher's notes.

Reverses

Reverse sequences are sequences which show the shape of the hand, but potentially drive the auction too high. According to the partnership agreement they may or may not either require or promise extra strength, and they may or may not be forcing.

What is a reverse bid?

In general, an opener's reverse occurs *when opener's suit rebid facing a lowest-level change of suit response from partner is higher than two of his first suit.* In such circumstances partner will have to go to the three-level even to show simple preference.

Take the example sequence 1♦, 1♠, 2♥.

Suppose responder holds 3 diamonds and 1 heart in a hand of just 6 or 7 points. He will have little choice but to bid 3♦, and the partnership will find itself at the three-level with possibly no more than a combined 17 or 18 points. You might already be too high, and if not then you have removed any possibility of constructive action in the ongoing auction.

Reverse bidding situations can also occur at later points in the auction, but the present module limits itself to opener's reverses as above.

Some partnerships claim not to 'do reverses'.

They're wrong.

They may not allow a reverse bid to affect their next bid; they might not promise some particular minimum strength with it; they may or may not play it as forcing in some or all circumstances; but a sequence such as that above is by definition a reverse bidding sequence.

Strong or weak?

You have a choice as a partnership whether to play shape-showing (wide-ranging point-count) reverses or strong reverses.

If your choice is shape-showing then opener will always get to show a 6-card first suit (except possibly on a 6-4 shape) and it can be easily arranged (depending on how you open 4-4-4-1 hands) that an opening bid in a major followed by a rebid in a new suit will always promise at least 5-4 shape.

Against this, if a reverse bid by opener might show anything from 11 to 18 points what is responder supposed to do with 11 or 12 points when the bidding is likely to reach the 3-level with no indication of opener's strength within the range above, and no bidding space in which to investigate further?

Strong reverses

For the opening bidder such a sequence requires a minimum of sixteen points over a 1-level response and a minimum of fifteen points over a 2-level response. In the first case the sequence should be played as a 1-round force, and in the second case the sequence should be played as game-forcing.

These requirements will force opener to override his natural shape-showing instinct on occasion when lacking the required strength.

He might for example have to rebid in his first 5-card suit on a 5-4 shape and on occasion he might even reconsider his opening bid and perhaps start with 1NT on a 5-4-2-2 hand to avoid the problem.

Reverse bidding – teacher's notes.

Never create an artificial reverse just to show strength.
A 'strong' reverse bid is a way of showing the shape of the hand provided that you have sufficient strength. You should never use a reverse bidding sequence to show strength irrespective of the shape – this can lead to all sorts of misinformation.

Strongly recommended is that you should play 'strong reverses' – the choice of the vast majority of advanced and experienced players.

The example hands
Most of the example hands will involve hands on which opener's natural shape showing sequence would involve a reverse bid.
Whether or not a reverse bid is appropriate in each case will vary, and that decision, along with the implications if any, will be the main point of the exercise.

There are a significant number of experienced club partnerships who play wide-ranging shape-showing reverses, but I know of no good to expert pairs who do not include the strong reverse as part of their armoury.