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This Week in Bridge

(215) Transfer Wolff Over 2NT Rebids

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Level: 6

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General

Transfers have become a larger and larger part of both competitive and constructive bidding. These transfers help with playing the contract from correct side, but they are also effective in searching for a fit while keeping the auction at a low level. One auction where transfers by Responder can be helpful is after Opener has started with a suit opening bid at the 1-level (1X) and then made a jump rebid of 2NT – showing a balanced hand with 18-19 points. Let's see how transfers by Responder in this auction can help our side describe our hands in the limited space below 3NT.

Note: This treatment replaces Modified Wolff Signoff after a 2NT rebid.

Transfers by Responder Over 2NT Rebids

Here we look at the six possible auctions that begin 1X – 1Y – 2NT.

1♣	1♦	1♣	1♥	1♣	1♠
2NT		2NT		2NT	
1♦	1♥	1♦	1♠	1♥	1♠
2NT		2NT		2NT	

We will see that we treat most of these auctions similarly. Let's look at an example in detail.

Example

- | | |
|-----|-----|
| 1♣ | 1♠ |
| 2NT | __? |
- 3♣* *Modified Wolff Signoff, Relay to 3♦, (see below for hand types)*
 - 3♦* *Game Forcing Transfer, 4+card ♥, looking for M-suit fit*
 - 3♥* *Game Forcing Transfer, 5+card ♠, looking for ♠ fit*
 - 3♠* *Game Forcing Transfer, 5+card ♣, slam trying, willing to go past 3NT*
 - 3NT To Play
 - 4♣ Gerber (or Minorwood)
 - 4♦ Self-Splinter, 0-1♦, 6+♠, slam try
 - 4♥ Self-Splinter, 0-1♥, 6+♠, slam try
 - 4♠ To Play



Modified Wolff Signoff 3♣ Bid

As you can see most of these transfers are used with game forcing hands. What if you have a weak hand as Responder and want to correct to a partscore below 3NT? We have some options for accomplishing this using the special 3♣ relay bid called *Modified Wolff Signoff*.

Example

1♣ 1♠
2NT 3♣*
3♦* __?

- Pass Pass with a 5+card ♦ and a weak hand. Example shape 4-1-5-3.
- 3♣ Responder rebidding their suit is an effort to play there. Showing 5+card♣ and about 5-6 HCP. Opener can raise this auction to game, but it is rare.

Using Wolff as a Slam Try

There are another couple of bids (at least) that can be used after this 3♣ relay bid – 3NT or an unbid suit below 3NT. Remember that we already have a way to make a slam try in ♣, by bidding 3♣ directly. We also want to have a way to make a slam try with a long ♦ suit (this is particularly useful when partner has opened 1♦).

Example

1♦ 1♠
2NT 3♣*
3♦* __?

- 3♥* Slam try in ♦ with ♥ shortness.
- 3NT Slam try in ♦, usually no shortness (may have shortness with mild slam try).
- 4♣ Slam try in ♦ with ♣ shortness (and strong enough hand to go past 3NT).
- 4♦ Minorwood in ♦.
- 4M Exclusion in ♦



Opener's Rebid After Transfer by Responder

After we make a game forcing transfer then Opener knows about our shape and values, so they do not need to thoughtlessly accept our transfer. Instead, Opener should describe their hand the best they can.

Example

1♣ 1♠
2NT 3♥*
___?

- 3♠ 3-card ♠, normal bid with a fit.
- 3NT 2-card ♠, normal bid without a fit
- 4♠ 3-card ♠, minimum, usually no outside controls (no interest in slam).
- 4m 3-card ♠, cuebid, strong hand, cooperating for slam.

Note: Some players may play 3♠ as "default bid with 2-card support" and play 3NT as 3-card support and an offer to play – Choice of Game (usually 3334 shape).

Example

1♣ 1♥
2NT 3♦*
___?

- 3♥ 3-card ♥, normal bid with a fit.
- 3♠ 2-card ♥, 4-card ♠, natural
- 3NT 2-card ♥, not 4-card ♠, natural
- 4♥ 3-card ♥, minimum, usually no outside controls (no interest in slam).
- 4m 3-card ♥, cuebid, strong hand, cooperating for slam.

Other Examples

Responder 4-4 in the Majors

1m 1♥
2NT 3♥*

With 4-4 in the Majors Responder needs to continue to look for a ♠ fit. This is done by transferring to ♠ by bidding 3♥. This is game forcing with 4-cards in each Major. Opener usually bids 3♠, 4♠, or 3NT.



Another example that can be tricky is when the auction starts with both Majors.

1♥ 1♠
2NT __?

- 3♣* Relay to 3♦, to stop in ♦, ♥, ♠ OR slammish in ♦ -- 3NT, 4♣.
- 3♦* Game Forcing, 3-card ♥, usually a slam try.
- 3♥* Game Forcing, 5+card ♠ (opener bids as above).
- 3♠* Game Forcing, 5+card ♣, slammish.
- 3NT To Play
- 4♣ Gerber
- 4♦ Self-Splinter
- 4M To Play

Conclusion

These transfer bids by Responder after Opener's 2NT rebid showing 18-19 points add a significant amount of complexity to our bidding system. But this approach allows us to show partner many types of hands in the limited space between 2NT and game. This approach to combining transfer responses with a Modified Wolff Signoff gives us a powerful tool for finding a fit and exploring slam in this jammed up auction. Take some time to practice this system and give it a try with your regular partner!