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This Week in Bridge

(317) Responding to 1NT with a 2-Suiter: 5-Card Major + Minor

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Level: 2

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General

When partner opens the bidding 1NT and we have a 2-suited hand with a 5-card Major and our second suit being a minor, then our initial focus is on locating a Major suit fit. If our hand has little playing strength, we will keep the auction low. With more playing strength, we need to determine if we want to focus on our Major suit and notrump or if we want to introduce our minor suit – giving information to partner (helping them judge what to do) but also giving information to the opponents (helping them better defend the hand). Let's take a look at some of these hands and see how we judge our options.

Weak Hands with a 5-card Major and a 5-card minor

With weak hands we simply transfer to our 5-card Major and leave the contract there.

Example 1

♠ T9432

♥ J4

♦ 874

♣ 965

1NT 2♥*

2♠ Pass

Here we do not want to leave partner in 1NT. We transfer to ♠ and leave partner to play there.

Invitational Hands with a 5-card Major and a 5-card minor

With an invitational hand we must balance showing our distribution with keeping the auction at a reasonable level. With a 5-card ♥ suit we do not have many options for how to invite game.



Example 2

♠ 9
♥ KJ843
♦ A9432
♣ 85
1NT 2♦*
2♥ 2NT

After we transfer to ♥, we must rebid 2NT in order to invite. That is our only bid that shows invitational values and a 5-card ♥ suit.

But with a 5-card ♠ suit, we have a nice additional way to invite game and avoid playing in 2NT (which is something we do not want to do when we have a highly distributional hand).

Example 3

♠ QJ854
♥ 4
♦ AT843
♣ 52
1NT 2♣
2♦ 2♠*

This 2♠ bid is invitational with a 5-card ♠ suit. It is usually used with a hand that is 5-4 in the Majors, but we can also use this with any unbalanced hand that is invitational with a 5-card ♠ suit.

Game Forcing Hands with a 5-card Major and 4-card minor

With a 5-card Major suit, a 4-card minor, and scattered values, we tend to treat the hand as though it were balanced.

Example 4

♠ K5432
♥ A9
♦ K953
♣ Q4
1NT 2♥*
2♠ 3NT

Here we transfer to our ♠ suit and simply rebid 3NT, giving partner a choice of games between 3NT and 4♠.



With similar distribution, but our values concentrated in our suits, we bid both our suits.

Example 5

♠ KQT73

♥ 54

♦ AKJ3

♣ 43

1NT 2♥*

2♠ 3♦

With our values concentrated in ♠ and ♦, we show both our suits – transferring to ♠ and then rebidding 3♦ to show a game forcing, 2-suited hand.

We may also choose to show our second suit when we have a slightly more distributional hand.

Example 6

♠ A54

♥ AK873

♦ 5

♣ KJT4

1NT 2♦*

2♥ 3♣

Here we show our second suit because the best contract could be in ♥, ♣, ♠, or 3NT. We leave partner room to help us determine where best to play the hand.

Strong 2-Suited Hands with a 6-card Major

With a hand that contains a 6-card Major and a 4-card minor, we could choose to describe the hand as a 2-suiter (bidding both our suits) or a 1-suiter (showing our 6-card Major suit and our shortness with a splinter).

Example 7

♠ KQJ643

♥ 4

♦ A7

♣ A982

1NT 2♥*

2♠ 4♥

Here we transfer to ♠ and jump to 4♥ to show a hand interested in slam with a 6-card ♠ suit and shortness (singleton or void) in ♥. This is a splinter.

With a stronger 4-card minor suit, we would treat this as a 2-suited hand and bid both our suits.



Example 8

♠ KQJ843

♥ 54

♦ 3

♣ AQJ4

1NT 2♥*

2♠ 3♣

3NT 4♠

Here we start by showing a 5-card ♠ suit and at least a 4-card ♣ suit. Even if partner does not like our suit and rebids 3NT, we now rebid 4♠, showing a 6-4 hand that is strong enough to be interested in slam.

Conclusion

When we have a 5-card Major and a second suit that is a minor, we feel less pressure to show our second suit. Generally, we focus on showing the Major suit while trying to keep the auction at a reasonable level (low if we have less than game forcing values). With enough values for game, we can show our minor suit at the 3-level (after we transfer to our 5-card Major). You must use your judgement when it comes to these bidding tools. It is important to decide if exchanging info is more likely to help our side or the opponents.